

DEPARTMENT OF EARLY LEARNING

Report to Governor Gregoire and the Washington State Legislature

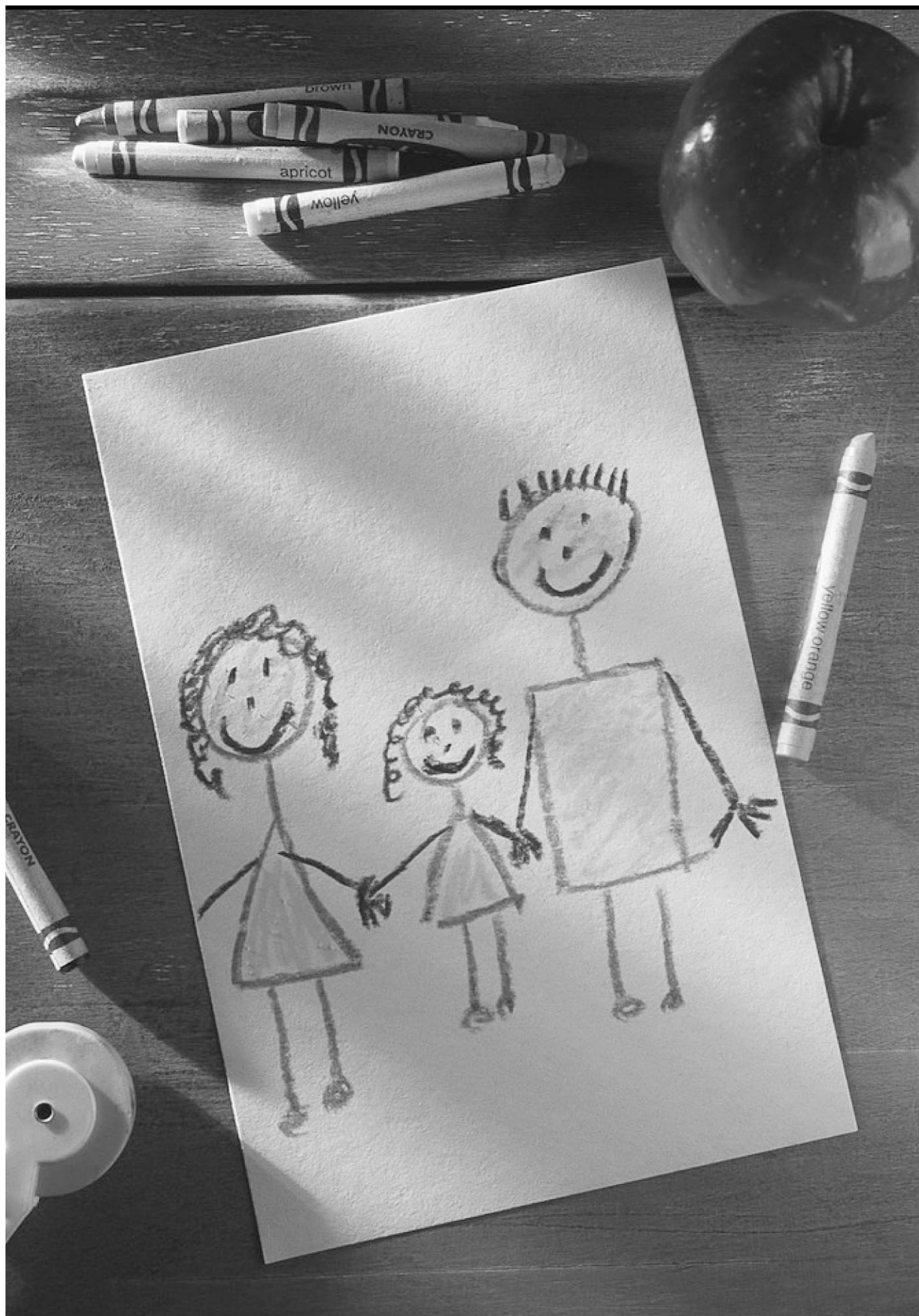
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The report responds to the requirements set forth in the Department of Early Learning's enabling legislation, 2SHB 2964, passed during the 2006 legislative session.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report reflects the Department of Early Learning (Department) in its infancy. The Department was established July 1, 2006, and its founding Director began work in late September. Building blocks to becoming an independent agency are underway, such as creating a self-standing budget, moving state-level staff to one location, developing agency policies and more importantly, establishing a robust agency culture. Despite the early developmental stage, this report demonstrates the Department's commitment to leading through strategic collaboration with parents, private entities, the public sector, and education partners in Washington. The Department intends to provide an energized focal point for establishing an enduring, comprehensive, and interconnected early learning system for children in the state.

Developed with wide-ranging input, this report fulfills the statutory requirement that the Department prepare, in collaboration with the Early Learning Council, a report with respect to the Department's roles and accountabilities. The report discusses the current state of the Department, outlines the collaboration that characterizes the Department's approach and includes fundamental, near-term recommendations.

Appendices to this report contain valuable Advisory Task Force input, highlights of United States and international research on the governance of early learning systems, and results of focus groups and parent surveys that were a vital part of the report's development.

The Department understands that the primary outcome of a comprehensive early learning system is school readiness for all Washington children – school readiness leads to greater likelihood of children reaching their full human potential, reduced negative social issues such as involvement in the criminal justice and social welfare systems, as well as increased competitiveness in the global market. The Department views school readiness as a three-part concept:

- (1) Children are healthy and cognitively, socially, and emotionally prepared for school;
- (2) Washington schools are ready to meet, in a learner-focused manner, the individual needs of the diverse children who enter kindergarten; and
- (3) Parents and primary caregivers, early learning professionals, and communities have the information and resources needed to support children and schools.

Cultural inclusion and respect for parents as first and most important teachers are key to an early learning system that results in children being able to succeed in school and life. A holistic readiness approach is imperative to ensure that young children experience the joy of learning and life-long hopefulness about what they can continue to learn and achieve.

To support a comprehensive early learning system that results in increased school readiness, the Department recommends the following legislative and budgetary actions:

- *Washington Learns'* early learning assignments be legislatively endorsed and funded, including an early learning information system to support child safety, quality improvement, and the capacity to inform Washington stakeholders on the progress of the early learning system;
- The Department be required to take a lead role in developing and executing a comprehensive, statewide early learning plan to ensure alignment of private and public sector actions, objectives, and resources;
- Creation of an advisory body to promote early learning and advise the Governor, Legislature and the Department on the statewide early learning community's needs and progress; and
- Additional programs not be added to the Department at this time so that a solid departmental foundation will be established and lead to sustainable early learning system progress.

The Department further urges careful consideration of Early Learning Council recommendations regarding financing approaches for early learning system quality improvements. The Early Learning Council and the Advisory Task Force both emphasized the need for increased and flexible child care subsidies to ensure that families experiencing high risk factors have access to quality care that will enable their children to start school ready to succeed. Encouragement for increased and expanded funding for the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) was also stressed in the development of both Early Learning Council and this report's recommendations. Finally, the Department joins stakeholders in asking that the continuum of education system funding, from early learning to post-secondary education, be strengthened to enable all Washington children the chance to fulfill their potential for life-long learning and success.

SECTION I:



INTRODUCTION

Creation of the Department of Early Learning was one of the first targeted actions taken under Governor Chris Gregoire's *Washington Learns*, an initiative to build a world-class, learner-focused seamless education system in the state. (For historical background information on the evolution of early learning efforts in the state, see Appendix A.) Emergent brain research and economic studies have shown that investments in early childhood education promote the best possible results for children, families, and the economy. By investing in early learning opportunities, Washington will increase its competitiveness in the global economy as well as nurturing children to reach their full human potential.

The Washington State Legislature established the Department as an executive branch agency effective July 1, 2006. Its founding Director, Jone Bosworth, began work in late September. Elevating early learning to a cabinet-level agency facilitates an environment in which early learning takes an influential place at the executive branch table, strengthening collaboration potential with other public sector agencies and the capacity to join education and private sector partners in efforts to create a world-class education system. Establishing a cabinet-level department of early learning also places Washington at the forefront of the nation, positioning the state to become a model for increased school readiness and long-term prosperity.

The primary duties of the Department, as specified in the legislation, are to implement state policy on early learning and to coordinate and integrate child care and early learning programs. Specifically, legislation details that the Department will:

- Respect parents as their children's first teachers and primary decision-maker, and involve them in development of policies and programs that affect their children;
- Work with and support the public and private sectors toward a comprehensive and collaborative system of early learning that supports parents, children and providers;
- Promote best practices in child care and early learning programs;
- Improve parent education and support;
- Cooperate with Thrive by Five: The Washington Early Learning Fund (Thrive By Five Washington) in its activities including providing data and support necessary for the successful work of the partnership;
- Carry out activities to improve the quality of early learning opportunities for young children including activities in cooperation with the private-public partnership;
- Administer child care and early learning programs;
- Work cooperatively and in coordination with the early learning council;
- Collaborate with the K-12 system at the state and local levels to ensure appropriate connections and smooth transitions between early learning activities and the K-12 system; and
- Standardize administrative oversight activities (program standards, licensing criteria, financial audits and site visits) so that programs function in an integrated manner.¹

This report seeks to fulfill Section 506 of the Department's enabling legislation that requires:

"...(T)he department of early learning, in collaboration with the early learning council, shall prepare a report and make recommendations to the governor and appropriate committees of the legislature detailing:

- (1) Coordination and collaboration between the department and the K-12 system at the state and local levels to ensure appropriate connections and smooth transitions between early learning and K-12;
- (2) Ongoing coordination and collaboration between the department and other programs not included in the department;
- (3) Ways the department will support local communities in encouraging public-private partnerships, innovative solutions to local issues, coordination of early learning services, and improved transitions from early learning to kindergarten;
- (4) The relationship between the department and the private-public partnership;
- (5) Internal governance of the department, to be implemented July 1, 2007, upon termination of the early learning council; and
- (6) Transition of any additional early learning programs and responsibilities, including administration of federal child care funds and subsidy eligibility and payment functions."

The legislation also provides for two evaluations. In 2010, the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC) will review Department of Early Learning success in involving parents; improving quality, availability and affordability of early learning services; and operating efficiently. The Department Director and staff have already had an initial meeting with JLARC staff. In addition, the Department is directed to commission a longitudinal study to assess whether children are better prepared for kindergarten and long-term school success as a result of Department early learning programs.²

¹2SHB 2964, Section 103

²As part of strategic planning, the Department looks forward to clarifying with the Governor and legislature expectations for the longitudinal impact study required in legislation. Section 109 of 2SHB 2964, the legislation that created Department of Early Learning, requires the Department to commission "a longitudinal study comparing the kindergarten readiness of children participating in *the department's* programs with the readiness of other children..." The study must compare "achievement as children of both groups progress through the K-12 system." A key question will be how to define the scope of the Department's programs for this study.

SECTION II:



STATUS OF THE DEPARTMENT

The Department is a small agency with an immense mission to promote school readiness through quality early learning that enables children to seamlessly enter kindergarten ready to succeed in school and life. Currently, the Department is comprised of 184.5 full time equivalent (FTE) employees; of which 127 are licensing personnel located statewide. Six positions were provided to establish the new cabinet-level Department and hiring of these six positions is in progress. In total, the Department was provided the following human resources to undertake its mission:

165 FTE's transferred from the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS)

- Regulate child care centers and homes statewide.
- Administrate child care subsidies for low income families.
- Provide services to improve the quality of child care programs.
- Administrate the Head Start State Collaboration Office.

13.5 FTEs transferred from the Department for Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED)

- Administrate the pre-kindergarten Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP).

No FTEs transferred from the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)

- Administrate the Early Reading Initiative.

The six new FTEs to support the infrastructure for the new cabinet-level Department are:

- Director
- Deputy Director
- Fiscal Manager
- Human Resources Manager
- Information Technology Manager
- Fiscal staff member

Staff at the state office level will be co-located in December and the 127 staff statewide will remain co-located with DSHS. Budgets and infrastructure resources remain with their respective originating agencies at this time.

Vital to the Department's success is a culture that values parents as first teachers, authentic collaboration with other public and private partners, and support for quality and innovation at local, regional, and state levels. To this end, the Department is in a pre-strategic planning phase in which all staff were provided an opportunity to give input into values, principles, and an organizational structure to support the broadened agency mission. Additionally, the Department has involved parents of Head Start/ ECEAP services as members of the hiring teams for the new positions. This internal work combines with the external stakeholder work in forging a new identity for the merged workforce.

SECTION III:

DEVELOPING THE REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Department participated in a highly inclusive process in the development of this report and recommendations. The legislation called for the Department, in collaboration with the Early Learning Council, to respond to a number of questions regarding collaboration and governance. To respond in the most informed, collaborative manner, the Department retained a consultant and partnered with an “Advisory Task Force” to ensure that diverse perspectives were infused. The consultant reviewed best practices in early learning literature, interviewed other state leaders to obtain “lessons learned” information, and also looked to international models, feeding all the information into the Advisory Task Force process. In addition, the Department conducted local community focus groups and gathered information from parent surveys. Last, the Department’s staff participated in structured dialogues with the consultant, who synthesized the staff input and provided that information to the Advisory Task Force as well.

Collectively, five primary themes emerged from the interviews with other states and the literature review of national and international best practices in early learning (Appendix B includes specific findings from literature reviews and interviews.):

- Private-public partnerships work best where there is a shared vision, clear definition of roles, and alignment of responsibilities based on the strengths of each respective partner.
- Development of a comprehensive, statewide early learning plan is crucial to build the shared vision.
- Local early learning work is key to long term and substantial change. Local communities build solutions that have better results for their community.
- Parental involvement in decision-making is the key to having policies and programs that genuinely work for families.

- A clear way of measuring whether early learning efforts are effective is critical to evaluating whether children are ready for school; measurements can be tools or processes and should include the evaluation of children's readiness, schools' readiness, and parents'/caregivers and communities' readiness.

The Department takes very seriously the "lessons learned" from other states. While continuous learning will occur, this literature review and information from other states was extremely helpful to the collaborative group in formulating recommendations to the Governor and Legislature; Washington will seek to avoid the pitfalls other states have experienced.

The Advisory Task Force (names included in Appendix C) identified further issues and provided insightful input regarding early learning system development in Washington. Some of the most repeated statements/themes were:

- Collaboration is time-intensive. To be effective partners, multi-disciplinary professionals need to be able to attend meetings consistently -
- collaboration needs to be a core part of their job, not an "add-on."
- For parents to be involved as partners, meetings to be during non-business hours with child care provided at the meetings.
- Good information systems are critical for outcome-based accountability, sharing information about child care programs with parents, efficient operation of the regulatory system and implementation of a quality rating and accountability system.
- Shared vision and agreement about respective roles are critical elements in the relationship between Department of Early Learning and Thrive By Five Washington.
- An early learning advisory body with an inclusive and influential membership would help keep the focus on early learning in Washington; there should be a strong link with the proposed P-20 coordinating entity to ensure a seamless system.
- Schools and early learning don't simply meet at the kindergarten transition. Areas of overlap include parent support, early intervention, nutrition and before and after-school care.

When local school and early learning providers and leaders plan together, positive results for children occur.

- Efforts to educate the public about the importance of early learning need to be expanded.
- Department of Early Learning field licensing staff located around the state should be employed as "ambassadors" who help to foster two-way communication between local communities and statewide policymakers.

All of these statements/themes were considered as the Department finalized the report and recommendations. Additionally, the speakers and public comments during the Washington Learns and Early Learning Council public meetings were taken into account with the Advisory Task Force input.

In September and October 2006, the Department convened six community focus groups to gather local input on what's working and what's needed. Focus groups were held in Wenatchee, Bremerton, Spokane, Vancouver, Toppenish and Shoreline. In brief, local communities emphasized individualization to meet local communities' needs, comprehensive supports for parents such as home visiting programs, and encouragement of local innovation through incentives and other sustained funding. A full description of themes and issues from these discussions are included in Appendix B.

The Department also surveyed a sample of ECEAP and Head Start parents as well as some family, friend and neighbor caregivers. Survey questions and synthesized responses include:

1. What should be the top priority for the Department of Early learning?

- My child learns key skills such as numbers, letters and colors.
- My child has fun, learns to get along with other children, problem-solve, and feel successful.
- I want funding so that all children, no matter their income, can be in good early learning programs with comprehensive services like ECEAP and Head Start.
- I want training for staff and parents on early learning issues.

- I want funding for tutoring for K-12 kids (before and /after school as well).
- I want adequate funding for all program requirements.

2. What would be most helpful to you in your job as a parent?

- Resources and information to help me with parenting generally, as well as with helping my child learn at home.
- Good parent-teacher communication: Frequent, even weekly, reports from school/child care about how my child is doing, strengths and weakness, and what he or she is learning.
- Parenting classes.
- Child care during the hours I need it.
- Transportation.
- Opportunities to be involved .
- Knowing standards are being met, a qualified person is providing care and the program is focused on learning.
- "How to's" in accessing resources for my family's on medical and dental, etc.
- Strategies for helping my child learn.
- Wealth of activities for children (YMCA/ YWCA's, Boy's & Girls Clubs, etc).

3. What do you think your child's preschool teacher or care providers need most from this new Department?

- Resources for supplies, equipment, computers and toys.
- Increased income and benefits.
- More staff and parent volunteers.
- Affordable education and training opportunities to increase skills, stay updated in the field, and meet the needs of children with special needs.
- Education that is "progressive."
- Need more paid hours to do the work they do.
- Need a qualified pool of substitute providers to draw from.

In addition to focus group and parents' input, the Advisory Task Force had repeated, lively discussions around the beliefs and values that would support Washington's establishment of a statewide, comprehensive early learning system that works for all Washington's children and families. *Appendix D* seeks to capture important values/beliefs discussion themes and the Department will be mindful of this input in creating its own agency vision, values and principles. Last, each group involved in providing input into the creation of this report raised the issue of sustainable funding. In sum, stakeholders stated that Washington State needs to establish and fund a comprehensive system that supports local innovation and allows all children to access quality early learning opportunities.



SECTION IV:



INITIAL REPORT ON DEPARTMENT OF EARLY LEARNING COLLABORATION AND GOVERNANCE

As noted in Section III, experience from other states provided one key message: collaboration takes more time but leads to better results. The Department is committed to collaborating with Thrive By Five Washington, other private sector partners, local communities, the public school system, and other governmental and non-governmental agencies and organizations. This Section describes the initial stage of collaborative partnership development, addressing the six points required under statute:

(1) Coordination and collaboration between the Department and the K-12 system at the state and local levels

The public education system plays an important role in early learning. All school districts provide early intervention services for children with disabilities ages three to five years, and soon all will either provide or contract for early intervention for children birth to

three. Many school districts go beyond this mandate to serve other children below kindergarten age, including managing numerous ECEAP and Head Start programs. The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) also administers the nutrition program that provides financial support to child care programs for healthy foods. Finally, after-school child care programs are often located in school buildings and sometimes operated by the schools. The Department and OSPI will work together to:

- Ensure all children will have the best opportunity to enter kindergarten healthy, emotionally, socially, and cognitively ready to succeed in school and in life.
- Ensure that all schools are ready to meet the learner-focused needs of culturally diverse children that enter their doors.

- Develop and implement a kindergarten readiness assessment that is linked with the Washington State Early Learning and Development Benchmarks.
- Develop math and science curriculum materials for community organizations and higher education institutions to train and educate child care and early learning teachers.
- Develop strategies for substantially increasing early learning provider and teacher training opportunities through working with higher education institutions on awarding credit for community-based training; transferring of credits among institutions; providing evening and weekend classes; providing classes in rural communities; and developing math and science education for early learning providers and teachers.
- Create incentives and technical assistance linked to best practice models.
- Create budgetary items necessary to support the public sector work that collaboratively helps children be successful in school and life.

The Department will also collaborate with the Governor's Office of Education Ombudsman, making use of models and training regarding culturally competent practice, family involvement, and complaint resolution. In sum, the Department recognizes that parents and/or caregivers who feel confident that they are able to prepare their children to succeed in school and schools that are ready for children with individual learning needs, will result in creating a world-class education system with strong global competitiveness.

(2) Ongoing coordination and collaboration between the Department and other programs not included in the Department

Programs that support and provide services for early learning, though now more consolidated in Washington than in most states, will always remain to some degree a "complex system of systems." Systems focused on children and their families will not only include early learning programs and services, but also parent information and support, access to health care, access to assistance for basic needs, early intervention services for children with special needs

and disabilities, and the promotion of the importance of children's social and emotional development, to name a few.

The Department partners with state agencies that provide these additional programs including the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), the Department of Health, the Washington Council for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, and the Family Policy Council. Additionally, the Department supports interagency collaborations focused on shared goals, accountability, and aligned work.

At present, the Department works closely with DSHS on a day-to-day basis around the administration of child care subsidy eligibility and payment authorization, as well as investigation of child abuse and neglect in licensed child care facilities. The Department also contracts with DSHS for its agency infrastructure that has not yet been established. Further, work with DSHS is underway to complete a feasibility study for an early learning management information system. The management information system is necessary to gather data and evaluate the effectiveness of the Department, provide information to parents regarding the quality of child care programs, and easy access to the outcomes of children receiving high quality early learning.

(3) Ways the Department will support early learning efforts in local communities

Currently, the lion's share of public funding for early learning originates from either federal or state funding streams. At the same time, local communities are building and managing elements of early learning. A number of communities have established local planning and coordinating entities that make decisions about local early learning funds, set goals, and identify community needs. Other communities have been designated "high impact" demonstration projects, locally designing their planning structures to identify community specific values, needs, and goals. Local communities are where much of the action to support early learning is occurring. However, there is much work to be done to support communities, to connect communities to one another, and to ensure state and local efforts are closely linked and aligned.

Governor Gregoire's Summit, *Building Connections in Early Learning*, which took place in November 2006, is providing the Department with important information on local early learning planning, coordination, and partnerships. As a result, the Department is now providing small grants to each of the 19 local delegations to the *Early Learning Summit*. These funds are already helping communities continue their planning efforts, find "unusual" local champions who haven't been involved in early learning and represent the private sector, and leverage private funding.

The Department will champion and support local early learning partnerships and innovations with staff resources and funding that may be legislatively provided. The Department sees the need to increase both technical assistance and monetary incentives offered to local communities. The proposed Quality Rating and Improvement System noted in the *Washington Learns report* is one way local communities could phase in higher quality early learning care for their children. The Department is committed to supporting its local staff's involvement in collaborative local efforts and is exploring how licensing work may be streamlined to allow for current staff to be more active in local communities.

(4) The relationship between the Department and the private-public partnership

In January 2006, public and private funding partners joined to create Thrive by Five Washington, a charitable non-profit organization, chaired by Governor Gregoire and Bill Gates, Sr. Thrive By Five Washington's newly-hired President and Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Graciela Italiano-Thomas, begins work in January 2007. With the arrival of the new Thrive By Five Washington leader, we expect work on the partnership between the Department and Thrive By Five Washington to accelerate.

The Department will continue the collaborative work with Thrive By Five Washington that has begun. For example, the Department's Director serves as one of the public partners on the Board of Directors. Additionally, some Department staff have participated on various Thrive By Five Washington subcommittees. Department staff in Yakima assisted the Demonstration site effort with bilingual staff conducting door-to-door parent interviews to assess child care needs and the Regional Manager serving

on the Advisory Committee. The Department is also working to contract with Thrive By Five Washington to administer the 2007 Early Reading Initiative grants to local communities.

As outlined in *Washington Learns November 2006 report*, the Department will collaborate with Thrive By Five Washington to:

- Ensure parenting information is translated into multiple languages, readily available through worksites, libraries, faith communities, websites, and other places for parents and caregivers, including family, friends, and neighbors.
- Phase in a five-star rating system for child care providers, called the Quality Rating and Improvement System (subject to funding).
- Provide leadership, in partnership with local and state agencies, to early learning public-private partnerships forming in communities across the state. These local partnerships will be encouraged to seek local funding and develop strategies to improve coordination and exchange information between communities and early care and education programs, including those in K-12 schools.

As noted in our review of the literature and interviews with other states, successful public-private partnerships are characterized by shared, clearly articulated objectives and identified roles and responsibilities. The Department is confident that future collaboration with Thrive by Five Washington will be based on parties' respective strengths and authentic sharing of objectives.

(5) Internal governance of the Department, to be implemented July 1, 2007, upon termination of the Early Learning Council

A comprehensive, statewide early learning plan that crosses systems and sectors is necessary for achieving school readiness. Washington not only needs a strategic framework, it needs a structure for building shared accountability among the many entities that it comprises. The Department recommends the creation of an advisory body to promote early learning and advise the Governor, Legislature and the Department on the statewide early learning community's needs and progress. An advisory board that is inclusive, influential, and speaks clearly

about the broad early learning system is essential for building common ground and a shared landscape for early learning in the state. The Early Learning Council has done impressive work toward bringing together a broad array of interested parties to propose a comprehensive approach to early learning in Washington. The Department recommends that an enduring advisory body be established and that resources to coordinate this proposed advisory body be provided to the Department to ensure its effective input, operations and results.

The Department also strongly values parent voice and diverse voices, reflecting the rich heritage of Washington State. To support this value, the Department will create additional mechanisms for routinely seeking the opinions, concerns and ideas of parents, early learning providers, local communities, and other stakeholders. One such mechanism is the required negotiated rule making; parents, providers and any affected interests will be invited to join in the state's intentional work toward a common-sense regulatory approach.

Another means of specifically obtaining parent input exists in the ECEAP Parent Advisory Council. The Department is exploring expansion of this parent group to represent the interests of all parents' accessing child care and early learning programs in the state. Parents serving on this existing advisory body will be consulted with respect to any proposed expansion of the group prior to a decision being made. Parents serving on this existing advisory group have been included by the Department on hiring panels for the six new positions that were provided to establish the new agency. The Department wants to increase parent involvement in agency decision-making.

(6) Transfer of any additional early learning programs and responsibilities to the Department

The Department recommends that no additional programs or responsibilities be transferred to it at this time. The Department is still in its infancy and needs time to establish a budgetary, policy, and programmatic foundation for carrying out existing responsibilities for its new mission. As noted earlier in this report, ongoing work is occurring to help the Department become a stand-alone agency with human and fiscal resources to fulfill its mission.

Several programs and services were discussed for transfer into the Department prior to its creation. These included the Infant Toddler Early Intervention Program (ITEIP), pre-school special education services; child and adult care food program, Washington Council for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (WCPCAN), and child care subsidy eligibility authorization and payments.

Future additions to the Department will be considered. The Department will make recommendations to the Governor and Legislature regarding a process and criteria by which to assess transfer into the Department of any additional programs or responsibilities. The recommended process will likely make use of internal and system-wide strategic planning and will include input from other state agencies, the K-12 system, local communities, and other stakeholders. A key focus of any criteria will be to maintain the Department's focus on school readiness and its primarily educational mission.

The Department intends to seek a balance between collaborative efforts to move early learning forward, beginning to accomplish regulatory reform, carrying out all the currently mandated functions and programs and building an agency culture that promotes continuous learning both internally and externally. Streamlining work, sharing responsibility with other partners who have clearly defined roles, and using technology will be crucial to the Department's success.

SECTION V:



RECOMMENDATIONS

To strengthen Washington's capacity to ensure that all children enter school ready to succeed, the Department of Early Learning was created. As the first recommendation implemented under Governor Gregoire's *Washington Learns* initiative, the Department's mission is beyond the sum of its parts. Carrying out the mission necessitates regulatory reform, connecting of public and private systems influencing the safety, health, emotional and cognitive development of children, and providing research-based, culturally responsive resources that parents and caregivers may voluntarily access. The small cabinet-level agency has an immense charge that can be accomplished through strategic alliances and actions, recognizing that continuous evaluation and adjustment will be needed. This report reflects the Department in its infancy, but also illuminates how collaboration and broad stakeholder input will lead to better resource alignment that benefits children.

The Department of Early Learning, in collaboration with the Early Learning Council and a broad array of stakeholders, developed the following recommendations that are based on national and international information, parents' priorities and values, local communities' input, and rich dialogue

between education, child care, social work, medical and other professionals brought together to advise the new Department.

First, the Department recommends that the *Washington Learns* recommendations and early learning assignments be legislatively endorsed and funded. Several of the *Washington Learns* Ten-Year Goals for a World-Class Education System relate specifically to a comprehensive, quality early learning environment in the state. Honoring parents as first and best teachers, providing them with information and support to help their children "learn to learn" in their first years of life, and providing families access to high quality, affordable child care are vital underpinnings to the goal: *all children enter kindergarten ready to succeed in school and life*. Specifically, the Department recommends that:

- Resources be provided to ensure that the Department and Thrive by Five Washington are able to collaboratively support local partnerships that improve coordination and the exchange of information between the community, early care and education programs including K-12.

- Technology infrastructure and communications capacity be established so that parents, caregivers and local communities have access to information research and best practice information, quality of care ratings, and outcome evaluation data. An early learning information system is necessary to both link and track early learning system and student outcomes; this system's capacity must include linkage with K-12, other public sector and private sector systems.
- The Department receives the human and fiscal resources to undertake the regulatory reform necessary to ensure child safety, mutual respect between early learning stakeholders, and the clear focus on outcomes for children.
- A down payment on a Quality Rating and Improvement System be funded so that the state and local communities can support enhanced school readiness.
- The Department be supported in its collaboration with the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to develop a kindergarten readiness assessment that aligns with early learning developmental benchmarks.
- Coordination between early learning, K-12 and higher education be targeted, creating a well-trained educational (child care, pre-school and beyond) workforce that prepares children for success in school and life.

Second, it is recommended that the legislative and budgetary action converge to support the Department in taking a lead role to develop and execute a comprehensive, statewide early learning plan that ensures alignment of private and public sector actions, objectives and resources. From national dialogue, Washington has the information about what works and what does not work. One key finding from the report development process was that a strategic framework is imperative, a framework that clearly maps activities and programs, roles and responsibilities, and establishes a shared vision and objectives. A strategic framework greater than an agency strategic plan is all-important to public-private partnership success and streamlining of public sector resources.

Third, the Department recommends the creation of an advisory body to promote early learning and advise the Governor, Legislature and the Department on the statewide early learning community's needs and progress. The Department recommends that resources to support and staff this advisory body be provided to ensure its effectiveness.

Last, the Department does not recommend the addition of programs at this time. In order for the Department to achieve a solid foundation, it needs a robust culture, budgetary and policy base. The Department's significant promise will be reinforced by allowing for its foundation to be well-established. The creation of the Department was vanguard in the nation and foundational integrity is essential for future success in achieving collaborations that result in school readiness for all Washington children.

APPENDIX A:

HISTORY OF EARLY LEARNING IN WASHINGTON STATE

The creation of Department of Early Learning occurs in the context of a long history of public policy related to child care and early learning. Over the years, bipartisan legislative support, state level collaborations, advocacy and intermediary organizations, and strong partnerships and innovative efforts in local communities have helped improve the quality, affordability and availability of early learning services for children and families. Parents everywhere seek all the best for their young children. Child care and early learning providers work hard to meet the needs of young children, often on a shoestring. Family, friend and neighbor caregivers also play an important role in the continuum between parents and formal early learning settings. Yet, not all young children in Washington have access to high quality and affordable early learning. The creation of Department of Early Learning as a cabinet agency brings new visibility, focus and coordination to early learning, as it strengthens a commitment to partnership with the private sector.

In the mid-1980s, Washington State began efforts to increase focus on child care and early learning, improve access to child care for low-income working families, and consolidate and coordinate state and local efforts around early learning. Increased federal funding and replication of successful local models were instrumental in generating many of these changes. Simultaneously, increased attention to global competitiveness and establishing accountability for K-12 student achievement, coupled with findings from brain research and the impressive return on investments in early learning, led to growing recognition of the importance of early childhood experiences in promoting school readiness.

1930-1984

Licensing of child care centers began in the 1930s in Washington State and was extended to

include family child care homes in 1967. Child care regulation was carried out through the child welfare system. The federal Head Start program also began in the mid 1960s, providing early learning programs for low-income three and four year olds. Services were provided in community settings and specific programs were designed for children in tribal, migrant and seasonal worker settings.

Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, originally enacted in 1965, provided funding for serving students in high poverty areas who are at risk of school failure, including children under age five. The Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), enacted in 1975, provides federal funding to states and local school districts on the condition that they make public education available in the least restrictive environment possible to children with disabilities, beginning at age three years. Both Title I and IDEA established a role for public schools in pre-kindergarten services for vulnerable children. IDEA also required states to establish early intervention services for children with disabilities age birth to three years.

1985-2004

In the mid-1980s, Washington State began efforts to increase focus on child care and early learning, improve access to child care for low-income working families, and consolidate and coordinate state and local efforts around early learning. Increased federal funding and replication of successful local models were instrumental in generating many of these changes. Simultaneously, increased attention to global competitiveness and establishing accountability for K-12 student achievement, coupled with findings from brain research and the impressive return on investments in early learning, led to growing recognition of the importance of early childhood experiences in promoting school readiness. A brief summary of key events and statutes:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1985 - Governor Gardner convenes the Task Force On Children's Day Care. • 1986 - Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) is created. ECEAP is a comprehensive school readiness program providing preschool, family support, parent education and involvement, and health services to low-income three- and four-year-olds and their families. The state contracts for ECEAP services provided in local communities. • 1986 – The first federal funding, Dependent Care Assistance Grants, is provided for child care resource and referral and school-age care services. • 1987 - Office of Child Development (later Office of Child Care Policy) is created, based on the recommendation of the Gardner Task Force, in the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) Children's Administration. Included in the duties of the Office are fostering employer support for child care and supporting a statewide network of local child care resource and referral agencies. • 1988 - The Child Care Coordinating Committee (CCCC) is established. It advises the legislature and state agencies and makes recommendations regarding the quality; affordability and accessibility of early childhood and school-age care programs. Membership includes representatives of state agencies, and the early learning field. In 2005, the CCCC was reconfigured under a new name. • 1989 - A statewide network of child care resource and referral agencies is established • 1990 - The Child Care Development Block Grant (later Child Care Development Fund) is instituted, providing federal funding to assist low income working families to pay for child care subsidies. Four percent of funds are designated for efforts to improve the quality of care. State matching funds are required. Child care subsidies are administered through what is now the DSHS Economic Services Administration. • 1993 – The Legislature passes an education reform act that includes a requirement for new assessments of student learning and new graduation standards. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1994 – Responsibility for child care licensing is transferred from the child welfare system to the Office of Child Care Policy. • 1998 - Governor Locke convenes a Commission on Early Learning, co-chaired by First Lady Mona Lee Locke and Melinda French Gates, that includes both public and private sector representatives. Among the recommendations in the Commission's final report in 2000 was a change in the assumption that learning begins in kindergarten, that the state will demonstrate a policy commitment to early learning, and that early learning services will be consolidated at the state level. • 1999 – Based on direction from the legislature, the State Training and Registry System (STARS), a career development system for child care providers, is begun. STARS includes training standards, required training for child care providers, scholarships, and a training registry. • 2000 - In response to the needs addressed in the Early Learning Commission final report and with a start-up grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Foundation for Early Learning is formed. • 2000 – Voters approve Initiative 728, providing additional funds for school districts. One of six allowed uses of these funds is early assistance for children who need pre-kindergarten support. • 2001 – The Division of Child Care and Early Learning is created within the DSHS Economic Services Administration. It is responsible for child care subsidy administration, licensing, health inspections of child care centers, and quality initiatives. • 2002 – The Early Care and Education Coalition (EC2) is established by a coalition of public and private organizations that fund services for young children and their families. The EC2 works to build public awareness and improve policy and funding for early care and education in Washington State. (In 2006, EC2 became a project of Thrive By Five Washington.) • 2004 – At a School Readiness Summit, draft Early Learning and Development Benchmarks, developed through a process jointly led by the Offices of the Governor and Superintendent |
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of Public Instruction, are released for public comment. The Summit, attended by 500 public and private sector leaders, aimed to build partnerships for school readiness with the Benchmarks as a key tool. The Benchmarks address what children will know and be able to do at 18 months, 36 months, 60 months and entry to kindergarten. The Benchmarks were published in 2005 and are currently being redesigned to support cultural competence.

- **2005 - Student Readiness for Kindergarten:** A Survey of Kindergarten Teachers in Washington State. In November 2005, findings from a web-based survey of kindergarten teachers commissioned by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction were published. The 398 kindergarten teachers who responded to the survey rated only 44 percent of their students as ready for kindergarten.³

There is enormous energy currently devoted to developing a comprehensive early childhood care and learning system in Washington State. The creation of Department of Early Learning is a central outcome of private and public partnership to improve early learning. A brief review of recent or current initiatives:

2005 - Washington Learns - Created and led by Governor Gregoire, *Washington Learns* is a review of Washington's entire education system, its structure and funding. The Early Learning Council serves as an advisory council for the *Washington Learns* Steering Committee.

2005 - Early Learning Council Established by the legislature in May 2005, the Early Learning Council is designed to provide leadership and direction for expansion, realignment and improvement of early learning services. In November 2005, in an interim report to the legislature and governor, the Council

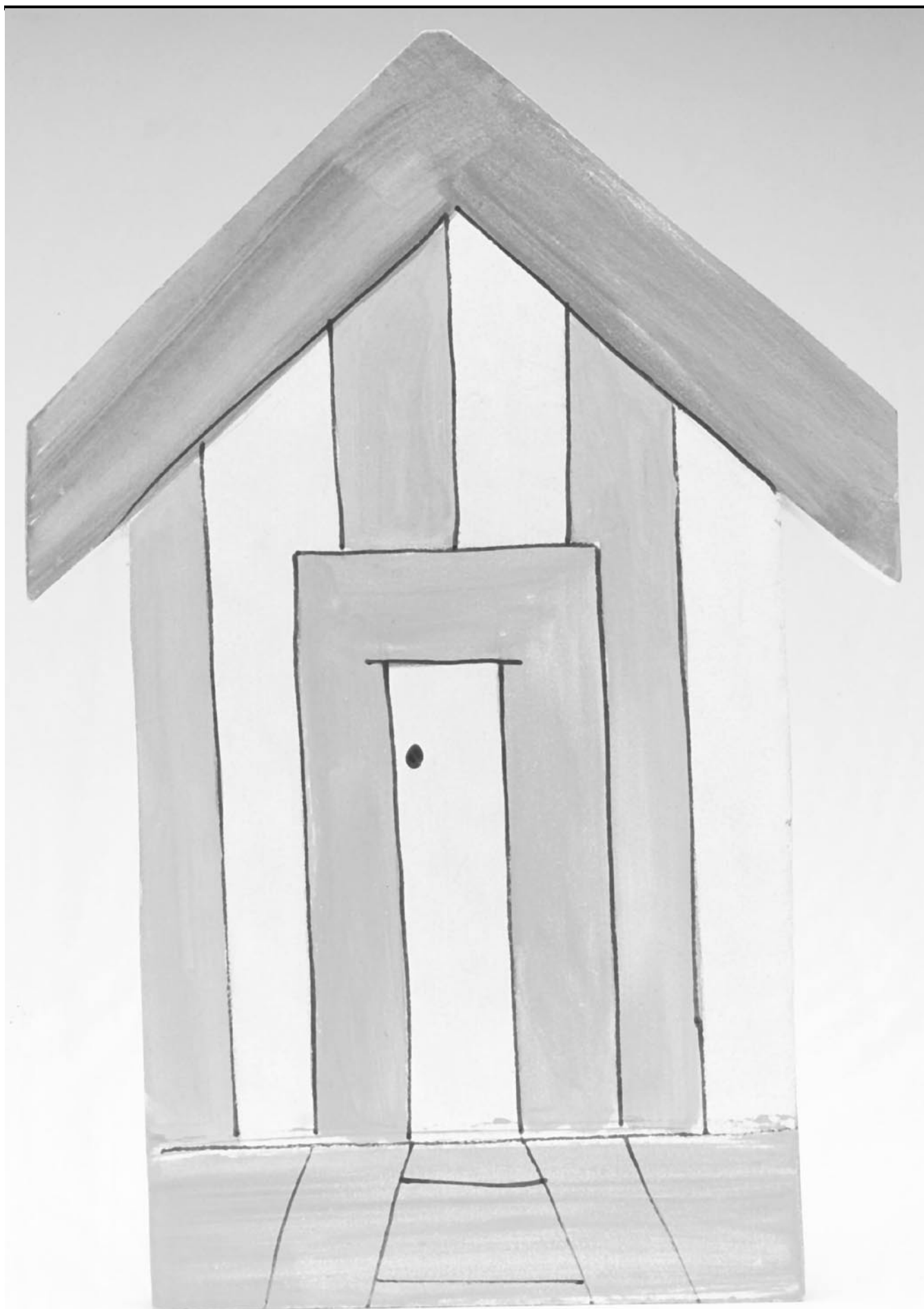
recommended the creation of a Department of Early Learning. At the request of the Early Learning Council, Governor Gregoire sponsored a November 13-14 *Early Learning Summit*. The Council, which expires in June 2007, will make a December 2006 final report regarding a system of quality rating for early learning programs that is linked to tiered reimbursement, regulatory reform and other issues.

While the Early Learning Council and *Washington Learns* are intensive, short-term catalysts to jump-start strengthen focus on early learning, two new organizations will – in their respective roles – lead over the long term to carry out the work of building a comprehensive early learning system.

2006 - Thrive by Five Washington Public and private funding partners joined to create *Thrive by Five Washington*, a charitable non-profit organization, chaired by Governor Gregoire and Bill Gates, Sr. Thrive By Five promotes community-based market-driven solutions to expand access to early learning opportunities for all children in Washington State. Thrive By Five will provide support and information to parents and caregivers and work to support early learning for children who are at home with a parent or other primary caregiver, in child care or in a part-day preschool setting. Membership of the Thrive By Five Board includes state leaders representing business, philanthropy and government.

2006 - Department of Early Learning The Department administers existing programs: Child care licensing and subsidies, ECEAP, contracts to improve child care quality, the Head Start/ State Collaboration Office and the Early Reading Initiative. The new Department's mandate is broader than the sum of these parts, encompassing work with the public and private sectors to build comprehensive system of early learning that supports families, best practices and providers.

³ "Student Readiness for Kindergarten: A Survey of Kindergarten Teachers in Washington State", Dave Pavelchek, Senior Research Manager, Washington State University Social and Economic Sciences Research Center, State Superintendent of Public Instruction. November 2005. The survey did not provide specific preparedness criteria, but relied on the professional judgment of kindergarten teachers about the preparedness of incoming students, and teachers used a variety of assessment tools and methods. The survey did ask teachers to consider indicators to readiness covering the five domains of physical health and development, social emotional, cognitive and general knowledge, language and literacy, and approaches to learning. The report does not note what response rate the 398 kindergarten teachers represent. Counts of kindergarten teachers are kept only at the district level. The number of public school kindergartners in the state as of October 6, 2005 was 71,459. The survey indicated an average class size of 20 students, and that 28 percent of students are in other than half-day programs. Assuming this is representative of the state, and depending on assumptions about the proportion of kindergarten teachers who teach two sections of half-day kindergarten (40-70 percent), the estimated response rate would vary from 15.5 to 19 percent. The ethnicity of students taught by responding teachers roughly matched the ethnicity of public kindergarten enrollment statewide. At least one teacher from 144 of 292 districts with kindergarten classes responded, with a geographic distribution similar to statewide enrollment.



APPENDIX B:

DEVELOPING THE REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Focus groups

Focus groups were held in Wenatchee, Bremerton, Spokane, Vancouver, Toppenish and Shoreline.

Themes and issues from these discussions include:

- Providers need higher wages, better training, and better subsidy rates.
- An agreement among state agencies on what is expected at kindergarten entry would establish consistent expectations for early learning providers. Some want a common assessment tool to help them gauge whether they are being successful.
- Methods are needed to encourage elementary schools, particularly principals and kindergarten teachers, to connect with early learning providers and parents. Principals and teachers should welcome and collaborate with early learning providers and parents. Principals and teachers need to better understand the importance of early learning and what quality early learning does to make their jobs easier.
- Comprehensive supports for parents are needed - such as home visiting and parenting classes. Media messages could emphasize that all parents need help sometimes. Messages should also encourage parents to ask for guidance, whether it is from family and friends, faith communities and neighbors, or programs specifically designed to help parents.
- Local innovations should be shared and funded across the state. Many innovations are aimed at connecting various pieces of the system. This

work requires designated staffing. The staff serves as the glue to hold the partnership together.

- Some child care providers need adult basic education. Adult basic education needs to be provided in the provider's primary language, which is not always English. Adult basic education can also incorporate early childhood education.
- Programs need support and encouragement to redesign what they do based on changing community needs. There isn't always more money, so priorities must be set.
- For children with special needs, and their families, transitions between early learning and kindergarten and between Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education are a concern.

Review of Literature

As states have sought to better meet the needs of young children, much attention has been devoted to systems-building to support this work. Federal and foundation funding⁴ has supported research on the components of a comprehensive system as investigation of models being used in various states and localities. Review of this literature highlights the importance of:

- Looking broadly at school readiness: Focusing on ready schools and ready communities as the well as ready children⁵. With this focus, both the early learning and the K-12 systems have an integral role in school readiness, as does family support.

⁴ Among them, the BUILD Initiative, Comprehensive Early Childhood Systems Grants, Head Start/State Collaboration Office. The State Early Childhood Policy Technical Assistance Network (SECPTAN) and the National Governor's Association also provide information on early childhood initiatives for state policymakers. In Washington, the Kid's Matter Framework was developed to flesh out these concepts.

⁵ Building the Foundation for Bright Futures, final report of the National Governor's Association Task Force on School Readiness, 2005. National Educational Goals Panel, 1990.

- Acknowledging that a comprehensive early learning system encompasses health, mental health, nutrition, and early intervention for children with special needs and family support and early care and education.⁶
- Establishing structures and shared outcome goals to foster the joint responsibility and accountability needed for success in improving school readiness.⁷
- Attending to communication between state policymaking and local efforts. Local communities are where much of the action, responsibility and decision-making for the broad early learning system takes place. State and local efforts must be closely linked.⁸

Review of Early Learning Collaboration and Governance Models

The Early Learning Council and the advisory task force, reviewed collaboration and governance issues in eight states selected for their attention to governance and collaboration issues, their success in aspects of building a strong system to promote school readiness, or both. Governance issues in another field with parallels to early learning, environmental clean up, was also reviewed. Finally, international perspectives on early learning system-building were briefly explored.

Summarized key points from review of these models:

- Development of a comprehensive plan is a frequent means of building shared vision and accountability at the state level among public agencies and private partners. Public education, health, mental health, and social services are seen as key public sector partners in early learning.
- Work at the local community level is seen as the key to long-term and sustainable change. Local communities build solutions that work in their particular circumstances. The state influences

diffuse local action through monetary incentives, templates, and standards that have some flexibility for local conditions.

- Local early learning coordinating bodies are a frequent feature. Most states have a “mixed” system, in which local communities choose a convening organization that serves as a fiscal agent, and no one type of organization plays this role in every community.
- New free-standing early learning agencies in Georgia and Maryland have moved deliberately during their first year to integrate component programs, establish new working relationships and set vision and plans for action.
- Private-public partnerships and state agencies work best together where there is a shared vision, a clear understanding of respective roles, and the strengths of each sector are employed.
- In many states, the public-private partnership plays a lead role in public outreach and, in general, in connecting with families to support their role as their child’s first teacher.
- Many states are working to assess kindergarten readiness as a gauge for evaluating the effectiveness of the broad early learning system. Some are addressing the issue of how to share readiness data with local communities to shape their early learning efforts. Work in this area links early learning and the K-12 system.
- States struggle to develop effective ways to involve parents in state level early learning policy discussions. Strategies include working with parent leaders in local communities, enhancing parent information available via the websites, recruiting via parent education and early learning programs, and separate parent councils. Pre-K programs such as Head Start, with their emphasis on family involvement, are often models in this area.

⁶ Beyond Parallel Play: Emerging State and Community Planning Roles in Building Early Learning Systems, State Early Childhood Planning and Technical Assistance Network and the Build Initiative, 2006.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Building the Foundation for Bright Futures, final report of the National Governor’s Association Task Force on School Readiness, 2005.

Specific Models

Another Field: The Environment The Department looked at the governance structure Washington State has established to coordinate among multiple state agencies and local jurisdictions involved in saving Puget Sound, the Puget Sound Action Team.⁹ The Puget Sound Water Quality Authority was created in 1985 and reconfigured as Puget Sound Action Team in 1996. The structure continues to evolve, as the Team is currently considering modifications to its governance structure to better promote coordinated action.

Clean up of Puget Sound has many parallels to early learning: Success requires both coordinated work among multiple state agencies and the ability to create incentives for local and private sector action. Local decision-making and state decision-making informed by local needs are important. It is a situation in which substantial current investment is needed to achieve future benefit. Long-term focus is necessary. Key points of interest for the early learning field:

- Puget Sound Action Team uses an overarching plan with performance measures to align state level action. The plan is linked to individual agency budgets and annual performance indicators.
- They have found that a state-level system that doesn't connect with local partners is not effective. Coordinating diffuse local action is a far more complex task than state-

level alignment. Tools they use are monetary incentives, templates (models) that make sense at the local level, and setting standards with room for local adaptation.

- A body that is in statute, appointed by the Governor and includes sectors that will always care about the issue helps keep focus on it over the long haul.

Other States The Department reviewed the governance and collaboration structures of eight states selected for their recent attention to governance structures, their success in particular aspects of building an effective early learning system, or both. Four of the eight states profiled are among the nine Global Challenge States proposed by Washington Learns as benchmarks for Washington -- to compare against in terms of ability to compete in the global economy.¹⁰ Two states, Massachusetts and Georgia, are, along with Washington, among only a few that have consolidated early learning programs in a freestanding agency. Two, Oklahoma and Minnesota, were among the six states profiled in the 2006 Build Initiative report.¹¹ Five, in addition to Washington, were among the ten states profiled in a North Carolina state agency report to its legislature regarding strengthening its early learning system.¹²

Our research consisted of a telephone interview with an early learning leader in the state, generally the state Child Care Development Fund administrator¹³ and review of written descriptions of each state system.

⁹ This research consisted of review of the Puget Sound Action Team statute, membership, a brief written history and a proposal for changing the governance structure as well as discussion with the Executive Director of Puget Sound Action Team, Brad Ack.

¹⁰ Global Challenge States are based on an index developed by the Progressive Policy Institute measuring states' ability to compete in the new economy. In addition to Washington, the top eight states in this ranking are Massachusetts, California, Colorado, Maryland, New Jersey, Connecticut and Virginia. NORED, an organization retained by Washington Learns to provide expert assistance on higher education and workforce issues also recommended that Minnesota (ranked 13th) and North Carolina (ranked 26th) be included in the benchmarking because of demographic and other characteristics.

¹¹ Beyond Parallel Play: Emerging State and Community Planning Roles in Building Early Learning Systems, State Early Childhood Planning and Technical Assistance Network and the Build Initiative, 2006.

¹² School Success for All North Carolina's Children: Reorganization Strategies to Strengthen the Early Care and Education System, Report to the North Carolina General Assembly, submitted by Office of the Governor / Office of School Readiness and Department of Health and Human Services, April 2006.

¹³ Interviewed were:

Janice M. Gruendel, Ph.D., Connecticut Governor's Senior Advisor on Early Childhood, Co-Chair, Connecticut Early Childhood Education Cabinet; **Gladys Wilson, Deputy Director**, Office of Early Learning, Florida Agency for Workforce Innovation; **Marsha Moore, Commissioner**, Bright from the Start - Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning; **Rolf Grafwallner, Ph.D.**, Assistant State Superintendent, Early Childhood Development, Maryland State Department of Education; **Ann Reale, Commissioner**, Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care; **Cherie Kotilinek, Manager**, Child Care Assistance (CCDF Administrator), Minnesota Department of Human Services; **Deb Swenson-Klatt, Director**, Child Development Services, Minnesota Department of Human Services; **Mark Lewis, Director**, Division of Child Care, Oklahoma Department of Human Services; **Nancy vonBargen, MS, Executive Director**, Oklahoma Smart Start; **Harriet Dichter, Deputy Secretary for the Office of Child Development**, Pennsylvania Department of Education, Policy Director

Key points of interest for Washington from each of these states are noted below:

Maryland

- A Children's Sub-cabinet comprising six state agency heads adopted a five-year action agenda for school readiness. Now, a committee that includes mid-level agency staff, parents, providers and other stakeholders is charged with ensuring this plan is carried out.
- The state has implemented a work-sampling kindergarten readiness assessment that is linked to early learning benchmarks. They can demonstrate increases in the proportion of children deemed prepared for kindergarten.
- Child care and early learning programs were recently consolidated in the state's education department. As a means for integrating these programs, staff and stakeholders worked together to set performance measures and goals.
- The primary roles of the Maryland public-private partnership organization are increasing public awareness and reaching families. The partnership organization also helps disseminate to local communities and local early learning coordinating bodies specific information about how the children of the community are faring in terms of kindergarten readiness, to shape their efforts.

Minnesota

- Minnesota began funding early learning coordinating groups at the local level in 2003. Only now are they considering a statewide group. Local groups have been helpful in the area of promoting shared resources for professional development and the creation of career lattices among systems. Inexperience working together, differences in jurisdictions (school districts vs. child care resource and referral boundaries), disputes over who convenes the coordinating group, and the fact that funds continuing to flow through individual programs have all been problematic.
- Minnesota began a pilot kindergarten assessment three years ago and has been gradually expanding it. Now they are working to find useful formats to get communities

information on the results of these assessments to inform their early learning efforts.

- School districts have provided parent education classes for 20 years – through this work, some parent involvement in early learning policy has developed.

Connecticut

- An Early Childhood Education Cabinet, convened by the Governor, includes directors of the state's education, human services, public health, higher education, disability and budget agencies. It also includes legislators and community representatives. The Cabinet was charged with developing a comprehensive plan for increasing school readiness.
- The Governor asked a newly-created Early Childhood Research and Policy Council, with membership including representatives of the business and workforce development sectors, to develop a five- to eight-year Early Childhood Investment Framework based on the comprehensive plan.
- The Framework, now nearing completion, will recommend specific investments. It is called "Ready By Five and Fine By Nine" and contains goals for both school readiness and K-3 experiences that extend learning and help children become successful readers.

Pennsylvania

- The state made a conscious decision to strengthen child care via a Quality Rating System (QRS) linked to tiered reimbursement. They did this in lieu of investing in a universal state funded pre-K program.
- In order to make their QRS successful – to create incentives for providers to participate - they have aligned with QRS subsidy rate structures, other grants, and all professional development funds.
- The QRS was pilot tested and there was an evaluation, with significant stakeholder involvement, before it was implemented statewide.
- To foster more parent involvement at the state level, Pennsylvania recently created Parents Council.

- In local communities, Pennsylvania has community engagement contracts that include a requirement to develop parent voice in early learning.

Georgia

- The stand-alone Department of Early Care and Learning went into effect in October 2004. It is responsible for child care licensing, administration of the pre-K program, the federal Child and Adult Care Food program and Child Care Development Fund quality dollars.
- The Governor waited until 18 months after the new agency was begun to appoint a body. The body has very high-level oversight over the agency, but will primarily function in an advisory role.
- The agency also has multiple advisory groups convened around particular issues.
- In the relationship between the agency and public-private partnership, Georgia leaders have found it important to make best use of the relative strengths of each entity (for example, the public private partnership can act faster) and agree on roles at the outset.
- Since 1996, 90 field licensing staff have worked out of their homes, rather than field offices. The aim is to have them active in local system-building efforts.

Oklahoma

- The public-private partnership organization focuses on school readiness broadly, while state agencies address primarily child care and Pre-K programs.
- The state established a QRS in 1998. They use higher subsidy rates as the primary inducement to participate. As a result, most facilities that take primarily children on subsidies are highly ranked, but there is much more variation among programs that take primarily private-pay children. The state is now looking at ways to create participation incentives for programs that don't serve many children on subsidies. Also, they are considering ways to ensure that higher subsidy reimbursement translates to higher wages for employees.

- There are local early learning councils in 16 of 25 areas around the state. A total of 3.5 FTE staff from the public-private partnership provide intensive technical assistance to these entities, including help with engaging local businesses. In the various communities, local councils are run by a university, a tribe, local United Ways and child care resource and referral agencies.
- Universal voluntary pre-K is defined in law as part of basic education and comes to school districts through the basic education funding formula. School districts generally operate Pre-K programs, but approximately 15-20 percent of funds are contracted by school districts to child care centers.

Massachusetts

- The freestanding Department of Early Care and Education was created July 1, 2005.
- The Director reports to a seven-member body that includes four state agency directors (education, higher education, human services and mental health), a parent, a child care provider, and two individuals with expertise in early childhood education.
- An advisory body has also been informally convened by the Department director and will likely be established in statute in the next legislative session, with membership categories specified.
- The Department director also serves on the Education and Higher Education Board.
- The agency has focused on child care affordability, access and quality because it resonates with people.
- Massachusetts recently began a pilot universal preK program. They made a conscious decision to use it to build quality in child care programs:
 - Pre-K funds are used for grants to child care programs that do certain things (including assessments) associated with higher quality.
 - The grant is available to all child care programs as long as they are willing to serve children on subsidies – but you get a larger grant as you enroll more children on subsidies.

- Programs must choose and use one of four common school readiness assessments in January and June and submit the results electronically to the Department.
- A parent advisory body has been convened and met twice. It is based on self-nomination and 30-40 individuals have attended the evening meetings. They send out notices and work through child care providers to recruit parents. Linking local issues and individual concerns to statewide policy issues continues to be a challenge.
- The Department emphasizes their web site as a key conduit for providing information to parents and receiving their feedback.

Florida

- The early learning system is locally based. Local early learning boards, almost always independent non-profit agencies, administer a variety of child care subsidy funds as well as the new voluntary pre-K program and nearly all child care quality funds. Some services are contracted out rather than operated directly by the coalitions.
- The composition of local coalitions is established in statute, with strong emphasis on business involvement. Local communities that impose a local-option property tax for children's services also have children's services coalitions, with similar responsibilities, and there has been some confusion over roles. The state Office for Early Learning is working to establish requirements for local coordination.
- The voluntary pre-K program operates primarily in child care centers (84 percent statewide¹⁴). Schools (15 percent) and family child care homes (1 percent), play a significant role in the pre-K program in rural areas of the state. The education department sets overall standards and education requirements for the pre-K program while the Office of Early Learning adopts rules and administers the programs – this collaboration is new, but seems to be working well.

- Florida is working to establish a process to make receipt of pre-K funds conditioned on the children in care meeting school readiness standards. Both cognitive and social-emotional aspects of readiness will be addressed.
- Florida recently moved away from having a cross-agency policy body to oversee early learning. After several years of such a body, the Governor chose to move policy authority was moved back to the state agency. A new body, with a clearly advisory role, consisting of chairs of the 31 local community coalitions, has been established.
- Florida has made significant investments in providing information to parents and child care providers through a strong management information system.

International Perspective Recognition of the need build comprehensive early childhood system is an international phenomenon. A joint conference¹⁵ of leaders from public and philanthropic entities engaged in this work from the U.S., Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia took place in 2002. Findings of interest from these discussions include:

- Programs begun in isolation in the four countries developed remarkably similar emphases and focuses.
- Working at the local community level is seen as the key to long-term and sustainable change. Rather than a new program or service, local communities build solutions that work in their particular circumstances.
- Financing strategies are common sense and focused on the long-term: Use resources effectively, create more flexibility in categorical funding streams, build public-private partnerships, and create dedicated revenue streams. In the United Kingdom local early childhood work is funded through general, in taxation – a stable funding source – and is three year increments, renewable based on successful work for up to ten years.

¹⁴ This percentage includes both licensed child care centers and faith-based programs that are exempt from licensing in Florida.

¹⁵ The International Meeting on Developing Comprehensive Community-Based Early Childhood Systems, UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families and Communities, January 10-13 2002.

APPENDIX C:**ADVISORY TASK FORCE**

NAME	AFFILIATION
Bancroft, John	Head Start and the White Center Early Learning Initiative, Puget Sound ESD
Bosworth, Jone, Co-Chair	Director Department of Early Learning
Burris, Gary	Department of Early Learning
Dunbar, Liz	Department of Social and Health Services
Fleming, Jan	Department of Health
Froelicher, Sangree	Department of Early Learning Head Start-State Collaboration Office
Kavanaugh, Susan	Contracted Project Staff
Lahmann, Mickey	Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction
Langen, Rachael	Department of Early Learning
Lowell, Lorena	Child Care Center Director Bambinos Learning Center
Mainella, Pat	Washington State University and Local K-12
Northern, Deborah	ECEAP Provider Puget Sound ESD
Shanafelt, Lynne	Department of Early Learning
Sullivan, Deborah, Co-Chair	Early Learning Council Praxis Institute for Early Childhood Education
Terry, Michelle	Parent and Pediatrician
Tokuda, Kip	Early Learning Council City of Seattle
Tvedt, Karen	Early Learning Council Staff Governor's Office
Usdane, Mark	Thrive By Five Washington, Gates Foundation
VonRosenstiel, Elaine	Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction
White, Bill	Department of Health
Yasi, Kathy	Family Child Care Provider Adventure Day Care



APPENDIX D:

VALUES AND BELIEFS

The following are values and beliefs that emerged from the advisory task force who shaped this report.

Honor parents' role as their children's first teachers and primary decision-makers.

Parents need access to support from their communities to help them help their children learn and grow.

Parents need clear information about early learning programs, supports and services and have a voice in early learning funding and policy.

Children and families need early learning opportunities that fit with their culture.

All babies, toddlers and pre-school age children need high quality care and education so that they learn and develop to their potential.

Children who have these good early learning experiences gain the social-emotional, cognitive and physical skills needed for success in school and life.

The societal return on investment in high quality early learning is huge – by giving children a good start in life, the need is reduced for future spending on school remediation, social services, and prisons.

Children and families need seamless services.

Education, physical health, social and emotional health, early intervention, social services and parent support are all linked to good outcomes for young children.

Shared accountability for early learning extends to include both the philanthropic and corporate/business sectors.

Linkage and close communication with local communities is essential for success.

Communities are supported through models, standards, technical assistance and funding.

Close communication with communities and partners is essential for success in improving early learning.

Openness, respect, and accountability to the public and to families and children is important.

Problem-solving and teamwork with parents, early learning providers, and other partners is in the best interest of children.

Sound data and current research must inform decision-making.

Information is shared with parents, partners and the public.

Creative innovations are encouraged.

Flexibility is important to address changing needs and opportunities.

All Washington citizens deserve to know about the importance of early learning to school success, reduced social ills, and economic development.

The Department is grateful to consultant Susan Kavanaugh and the Advisory Task Force involved in the development of this report: parents, early learning professionals and policy-makers, educators, social work and health professionals and other public-private stakeholders. These individuals demonstrated their passionate commitment to creating a better future for Washington's children by devoting time to provide their input and advice.

